APPENDIX

In these propositions I have explained the nature and properties of God: that he necessarily exists: that he is one alone: that he exists and acts merely from the necessity of his nature: that he is the free cause of all things and in what manner: that all things are in God, and so depend upon him that without him they could neither exist nor be conceived: and finally, that all things were predetermined by God, not through his free or good will, but through his absolute nature or infinite power. I have endeavoured, moreover, whenever occasion prompted, to remove any misunderstandings which might impede the good understanding of my propositions. Yet as many misunderstandings still remain which, to a very large extent, have prevented and do prevent men from embracing the concatenation of things in the manner in which I have explained it, I have thought it worth while to call these into the scrutiny of reason. Now since all these misunderstandings which I am undertaking to point out depend upon this one point, that men commonly suppose that all natural things act like themselves with an end in view, and since they assert with assurance that God directs all things to a certain end (for they say that God made all things for man, and man that he might worship God), I shall therefore consider this one thing first, inquiring in the first place why so many fall into this error, and why all are by nature so prone to embrace it; then I shall show its falsity, and finally, how these misunderstandings have arisen concerning good and evil, virtue and sin, praise and blame, order and confusion, beauty and ugliness, and other things of this kind. But this is not the place to deduce these things from the nature of the human mind. It will suffice here for me to take as a basis of argument what must be admitted by all: that is, that all men are born ignorant of the causes of things, and that all have a desire of acquiring what is useful; that they are conscious, moreover, of this. From these premisses it follows then, in the first place, that men think themselves free inasmuch as they are conscious of their volitions and desires, and as they are ignorant of the causes by which they are led to wish and desire, they do not even dream of their existence. It follows, in the second place, that men do all

things with an end in view, that is, they seek what is useful. Whence it comes to pass that they always seek out only the final causes of things performed, and when they have divined these they cease, for clearly then they have no cause of further doubt. If they are unable to learn these causes from some one, nothing remains for them but to turn to themselves and reflect what could induce them personally to bring about such a thing, and thus they necessarily estimate other natures by their own. Furthermore, as they find in themselves and without themselves many things which aid them not a little in their quest of things useful to themselves, as, for example, eyes for seeing, teeth for mastication, vegetables and animals for food, the sun for giving light, the sea for breeding fish, they consider these things like all natural things to be made for their use; and as they know that they found these things as they were, and did not make them themselves, herein they have cause for believing that some one else prepared these things for their use. Now having considered things as means, they cannot believe them to be self-created; but they must conclude from the means which they are wont to prepare for themselves, that there is some governor or governors, endowed with human freedom, who take care of all things for them and make all things for their use. They must naturally form an estimate of the nature of these governors from their own, for they receive no information as regards them: and hence they come to say that the Gods direct all things for the use of men, that men may be bound down to them and do them the highest honour. Whence it has come about that each individual has devised a different manner in his own mind for the worship of God, that God may love him above the rest and direct the whole of nature for the gratification of his blind cupidity and insatiable avarice. Thus this misconception became a superstition, and fixed its roots deeply in the mind, and this was the reason why all diligently endeavoured to understand and explain the final causes of all things. But while they have sought to show that nature does nothing in vain (that is, nothing which is not of use to man), they appear to have shown nothing else than nature, the Gods and men are all mad. Behold now, I pray you, what this thing has become. Among so many conveniences of nature they were bound to find some inconveniences—storms, earthquakes, and diseases,

etc.—and they said these happened by reason of the anger of the Gods aroused against men through some misdeed or omission in worship; and although experience daily belied this, and showed with infinite examples that conveniences and their contraries happen promiscuously to the pious and impious, yet not even then did they turn from their inveterate prejudice. For it was easier for them to place this among other unknown things whose use they knew not, and thus retain their present and innate condition of ignorance, than to destroy the whole fabric of their philosophy and reconstruct it. So it came to pass that they stated with the greatest certainty that the judgments of God far surpassed human comprehension: and this was the only cause that truth might have lain hidden from the human race through all eternity, had not mathematics, which deals not in the final causes, but the essence and properties of things, offered to men another standard of truth. And besides mathematics there are other causes (which need not be enumerated here) which enabled men to take notice of these general prejudices and to be led to the true knowledge of things.

Thus I have explained what I undertook in the first place. It is scarcely necessary that I should show that nature has no fixed aim in view, and that all final causes are merely fabrications of men. For I think this is sufficiently clear from the bases and causes from which I have traced the origin of this prejudice, from Prop. 16, and the corollaries of Prop. 32, and above all, from all those propositions in which I have shown that all things in nature proceed eternally from a certain necessity and with the utmost perfection. Here, however, I shall pause to overthrow entirely that foolish doctrine of a final cause. For that which in truth is a cause it considers as an effect, and *vice versâ*, and so it makes that which is first by nature to be last, and again, that which is highest and most perfect it renders imperfect. As these two questions are obvious, let us pass them over. It follows from Prop. 21, 22, and 23, that the effect which is produced immediately from God is the most perfect, and that one is more imperfect according as it requires more intermediating causes. But if those things which are immediately produced by God are made by him for the attaining of some end, then it necessarily follows that the ultimate things for whose sake these first were made

must transcend all others. Hence this doctrine destroys the perfection of God: for if God seeks an end, he necessarily desires something which he lacks. And although theologians and metaphysicians make a distinction between the end that is want and that which is assimilation, they confess that God acts on his own account, and not for the sake of creating things; for before the creation they can assign nothing save God on whose account God acted, and so necessarily they are obliged to confess that God lacked and desired those things for the attainment of which he wished to prepare means, as is clear of itself. Nor must I pass by at this point that some of the adherents of this doctrine who have wished to show their ingenuity in assigning final causes to things have discovered a new manner of argument for the proving of their doctrine, to wit, not a reduction to the impossible, but a reduction to ignorance, which shows that they have no other mode of arguing their doctrine. For example, if a stone falls from a roof on the head of a passer-by and kills him, they will show by their method of argument that the stone was sent to fall and kill the man; for if it had not fallen on him by God's will, how could so many circumstances (for often very many circumstances concur at the same time) concur by chance? You will reply, perhaps: "That the wind was blowing, and that the man had to pass that way, and hence it happened." But they will retort: "Why was the wind blowing at that time? and why was the man going that way at that time?" If again you reply: "That the wind had then arisen on account of the agitation of the sea the day before, and the previous weather had been calm, and that the man was going that way at the invitation of a friend," they will again retort, for there is no end to their questioning: "Why was the sea agitated, and why was the man invited at that time?" And thus they will pursue you from cause to cause until you are glad to take refuge in the will of God, that is, the asylum of ignorance. Thus again, when they see the human body they are amazed, and as they know not the cause of so much art, they conclude that it was made not by mechanical art, but divine or supernatural art, and constructed in such a manner that one part may not injure another. And hence it comes about that those who wish to seek out the causes of miracles, and who wish to understand the things of nature as learned men, and not

stare at them in amazement like fools, are soon deemed heretical and impious, and proclaimed such by those whom the mob adore as the interpreters of nature and the Gods. For these know that once ignorance is laid aside, that wonderment which is the only means of preserving their authority would be taken away from them. But I now leave this point and proceed to what I determined to discuss in the third place.

As soon as men had persuaded themselves that all things which were made, were made for their sakes, they were bound to consider as the best quality in everything that which was the most useful to them, and to esteem that above all things which brought them the most good. Hence they must have formed these notions by which they explain the things of nature, to wit, good, evil, order, confusion, hot, cold, beauty, and ugliness, etc.; and as they deemed themselves free agents, the notions of praise and blame, sin and merit, arose. The latter notions I will discuss when I deal with human nature later on, but the former are to be discussed now. They call all that which is conducive of health and the worship of God good, and all which is conducive of the contrary, evil. And forasmuch as those who do not understand the things of nature are certain of nothing concerning those things, but only imagine them and mistake their imagination for intellect, they firmly believe there is order in things, and are ignorant of them and their own nature. Now when things are so disposed that when they are represented to us through our senses we can easily imagine and consequently easily remember them, we call them well-ordered; and on the other hand, when we cannot do so, we call them ill-ordered or confused. Now forasmuch as those things, above all others, are pleasing to us which we can easily imagine, men accordingly prefer order to confusion, as if order were anything in nature save in respect to our imagination; and they say that God has created all things in order, and thus unwittingly they attribute imagination to God, unless indeed they would have that God providing for human imagination disposed all things in such a manner as would be most easy for our imagination; nor would they then find it perhaps a stumbling-block to their theory that infinite things are found which are far beyond the reach of our imagination, and many which confuse it through its weakness. But of this I have said

enough. The other notions also are nothing other than modes of imagining in which the imagination is affected in diverse manners, and yet they are considered by the ignorant as very important attributes of things: for as we have said, they think all things were made for them, and call their natures good or bad, healthy or rotten, and corrupt, according as they are affected by them. *E.g.*, if motion, which the nerves receive by means of the eyes from objects before us, is conducive of health, those objects by which it is caused are called beautiful; if it is not, then the objects are called ugly. Such things as affect the nerves by means of the nose are thus styled fragrant or evil-smelling; or when by means of the mouth, sweet or bitter, tasty or insipid; when by means of touch, hard or soft, rough or smooth, etc. And such things as affect the ear are called noises, and form discord or harmony, the last of which has delighted men to madness, so that they have believed that harmony delights God. Nor have there been wanting philosophers who assert that the movements of the heavenly spheres compose harmony. All of which sufficiently show that each one judges concerning things according to the disposition of his own mind, or rather takes for things that which is really the modifications of his imagination. Wherefore it is not remarkable (as we may incidentally remark) that so many controversies as we find have arisen among men, and at last Scepticism. For although human bodies agree in many points, yet in many others they differ, and that which seems to one good may yet to another seem evil; to one order, yet to another confusion; to one pleasing, yet to another displeasing, and so on, for I need not treat further of these, as this is not the place to discuss them in detail, and indeed they must be sufficiently obvious to all. For it is in every one's mouth: "As many minds as men," "Each is wise in his own manner," "As tastes differ, so do minds"—all of which proverbs show clearly enough that men judge things according to the disposition of their minds, and had rather imagine things than understand them. For if they understood things, my arguments would convince them at least, just as mathematics, although they might not attract them.

We have thus seen that all the arguments by which the vulgar are wont to explain nature are nothing else than modes of imagination, and indicate the nature of nothing whatever,

but only the constitution of the imagination; and although they have names as if they were entities existing outside the imagination, I call them entities, not of reality, but of the imagination: and so all arguments directed against us from such notions can easily be returned. For many are wont thus to argue: If all things have followed from the necessity of the most perfect nature of God, whence have so many imperfections in nature arisen? For example, the corruption of things even to rottenness, the ugliness of things which often nauseate, confusion, evil, sin, etc. But as I have just said, these are easily confuted. For the perfection of things is estimated solely from their nature and power; nor are things more or less perfect according as they delight or disgust human senses, or according as they are useful or useless to men. But to those who ask, "Why did not God create all men in such a manner that they might be governed by reason alone?" I make no answer but this: because material was not wanting to him for the creating of all things from the highest grade to the lowest; or speaking more accurately, because the laws of his nature were so comprehensive as to suffice for the creation of everything that infinite intellect can conceive, as I have shown in Prop. 16. These are the misunderstandings which I stopped here to point out. If any grains of them still remain, they can be easily dispersed by means of a little reflection.